

THE LEGACY OF THE BLUES vol.12

A series of recordings by the great blues artists

LIGHTNIN' HOPKINS

Texas's blues legend considers his world, his life and times



sonet

SNTCD
672

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1. Please Help Poor Me
2. Way Out In Abilene
3. Don't You Call That Boogie
4. Swing In The Backyard
5. The Hearse Is Backed Up To The Door
6. That Meat's A Little Too High
7. Let Them Little Things Be True
8. I Been Burning Bad Gasoline
9. Don't You Mess With My Woman
10. Water Fallin' Boogie

Distributed by P.R.T.
Sonet Records,
121 Ledbury Road,
London W11 2AQ

Lightnin' Hopkins — guitar and vocals
Ira James — harmonica
Larry "Bones" McClall — drums
Rusty Myers and Ozell Roberts — bass

Recorded at Doggett Sound Studio, Houston, Texas, engineer Bert Frlot.

With special thanks to Rolf Alm.

Produced by Sam Charters

Photo by Sam Charters



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It's a little difficult to recognize the city of Houston now if you haven't been in town for a few years. From the run-down, dreary city of twenty years ago it's become a modern city center of office towers and skyscrapers. It's grown to be the sixth largest city in the United States, and its prosperity seems to have filtered down to most of the people living there. Even the ghetto around Dowling Street looks a little better now. There are some new buildings, some paint on the old ones—there's even some feeling of a neighbourhood, of a community. There's less of the murmuring hostility you feel in a city like Memphis, where the economy seems to be at a standstill. It's certainly a quieter city now. The downtown renewal destroyed any areas where people lived in the center of Houston and when the offices have closed the only movement on the streets is an occasional automobile making its way to one of the suburbs. It's probably what the future holds for most American cities, and in a way it's an even more frightening prospect than their shabby past.

But some things in Houston still haven't changed. It's still as flat, it's still as hot, there are still as many mosquitoes in the wet country at the city limits. And certainly Lightnin' Hopkins hasn't changed. Like the city his life reflects a little of the new prosperity. He's living in a modern apartment with two new Buicks parked out in front. But otherwise his life goes on about the same. If he feels like playing he takes

some of the jobs he's offered. If he doesn't feel like it he doesn't.

Part of his reluctance is his intense dislike of airplane travel. "I'd be out playin' most every night of the week if it weren't for them airplanes. You know one thing, Lightnin' don't like to do is fly." But part of his reluctance is his closeness to his wife and his apartment and his neighbourhood. He doesn't even work much around Houston. "There don't be no jobs in Houston, you understand, least no jobs that mean nothing as far as the money goes. Otherwise I'd be out more." So he stays home, looks at television, spends his afternoon visiting friends, and usually finishes the day sitting out in front of his apartment, talking, and watching the cars stream past him on a jammed overpass taking commuters out to the suburbs.

When he does play he's just the same as he always was. If it's a club he plays more rhythm numbers; if it's a concert he sings the blues. "That's what they're there for, to hear me sing the old blues. So that's what I give them." He still has his feeling for the audience, and if he doesn't get them with his first song or two he shifts the mood, changes the rhythm, feels around on the guitar a little, and in a few minutes the audience is his. Lightnin's in his early 60's now—he was born in the small farm town of Centerville, Texas on March 15, 1912—but despite all the years he's been playing he can

still sound as if he just came down from the country last week, and he can still get more out of a guitar than anyone else playing in his style. His singing, if anything, has gotten even better. His voice seems to get a little deeper and stronger every year, and he still has the same loose control of his blues that he always did. What does he think about playing for college audiences now, instead of in the old clubs? "It's a lot better. I know, whatever I do, they're going to listen. And that's the way I want it. I want them to be listening."

Almost the only change in his musical life is that he's almost stopped recording. There was a period in the early 1960's when there seemed to be a new Lightnin' Hopkins album out every three or four months. Now he's choosier about sessions, and there's even more emotional concentration now than there was on some of his earlier recordings. He's been talking about his music for most of the day before he came into the studio to record these blues, and everything that he sang was an extension of what he'd been saying, even as the music changed and shifted to suit his mood. He's a very human singer; chords are often changed at random, guitar runs occasionally wander away, sometimes verses don't come together, but in everything he does there's the unmistakable creative presence of a great bluesman at work. He has an ability to project his emotions, to draw the listener into his music in a way that's almost unmatched

among modern bluesmen. It's this—more than the technical brilliance of his guitar playing or the dramatic intensity of his singing—that makes him such an unforgettable singer.

When you leave the studio with him and drive back into the empty darkness of downtown Houston you have to force yourself back into the present, back into the concrete and glass of the streets around you; since for a few hours you've been in another place and another time.

Houston and the rest of America has changed, the blues has changed, but Lightnin' really hasn't changed and he and his music are among the few things still left that give us some sense of the uneasy realities in the American experience that created the blues.

Sam Charters

About this Series

This is the last in a series of albums produced and compiled by blues authority Samuel Charters that has tried to explore the rich legacy of the blues. Even though there are more people listening to the blues than ever before, and there are occasional discoveries of previously unrecorded blues artists, it is obvious that the blues is disappearing from the American scene. The young black audience that reflected the moods and the

emotions of the blues has moved on to other forms of music, and the singers still performing and still creating are more and more involved with a different audience that has different attitudes and responses. There is only a steadily dwindling number of singers who still bring a real sense of creative excitement to the blues, and it's these artists that the "Legacy of the Blues" has been concerned with, trying to record and document every aspect of their unique musical genius. The series has tried, also, to show the incredible range and variety of the blues, and each album has been devoted to a different aspect of the music, from the Chicago sound of Mighty Joe Young, who is representative of dozens of young musicians playing in the city, to the delta blues of J. D. Short, who goes back to the oldest songster/bluesman tradition. Some of the musicians are well-known blues personalities like Memphis Slim, others, like Juke Boy Bonner, are still scuffling from job to job, looking for the song or the record that will bring them to a larger audience. Some were recorded with their own guitar or piano as accompaniment; others with small blues backing groups, but for each singer trying to look more fully into a different aspect of the blues. Almost every kind of blues and almost every kind of blues singer has been included. Their music is a vital contribution to the world's musical resources, and this series has tried to show the greatness of this contribution

—the legacy of the blues.

- Volume 1. Bukka White
2. Snooks Eaglin
3. Champion Jack Dupree
4. Mighty Joe Young
5. Juke Boy Bonner
6. Big Joe Williams
7. Memphis Slim
8. J. D. Short
9. Robert Pete Williams
10. Eddie Boyd
11. Sunnyland Slim
12. Lightnin' Hopkins

A book, also titled "The Legacy of the Blues", has grown out of the new research that has gone into these recordings, and it is being published at the same time as this last release, along with a sampler record including a song by each of the artists included in the series.

The Legacy of the Blues today

When this series was first conceived the word 'legacy' was chosen to describe the rich tradition the 'roots' - which the blues had lent to every style of jazz and rock that has been created in America. Because of this concern with documenting just what this blues legacy had meant, the series included every style of the blues - from the Mississippi country blues of J. D. Short to the sophisticated Chicago blues of Mighty Joe Young and his band.

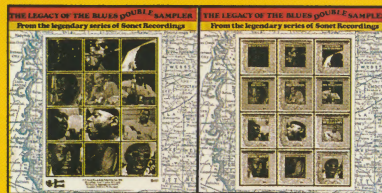
Now the word has taken on a deeper meaning. Already, when the series was completed, some of the artists had died, and now the list of the singers who are no longer with us has grown. It would be impossible to gather a collection like it today. With the loss of singers like Lightnin' Hopkins and Memphis Slim the dimensions of the blues have drawn in a little and it won't be around much longer. The legacy of the blues which the series was intended to document has become a much more personal legacy - it has become the legacy of these great bluesmen whose music made the series come alive.

When the albums were first released no one was sure how they would be received. A great many blues albums had come out in the 1960s and 1970s, and there were other records available by several of the artists. For many people, however, the series became a way to find the blues, to trace the styles and the meanings of the blues. The albums were released in a number of countries, and the liner texts were translated into most of the major languages. The book *The Legacy of the Blues*, (published by Marion Boyars in London and Da Capo in New York) which extended the biographical sketches of the liner texts and added chapters about the role and the language of the blues, had the same kind of success and it soon appeared in Japanese translation, as well as translation into Serbo-Croat which went along with the release of all albums in Yugoslavia!

With the new CD medium, the Legacy of the Blues will have a chance to reach a new audience, and hopefully they will find the richness and the genius that is the blues legacy, the 'roots' of today's music that is the heart of the blues.

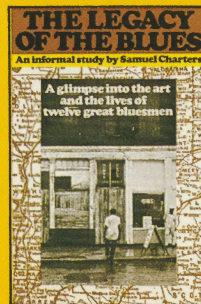
Samuel Charters 1988

SPECIAL PRICE SAMPLER & DOUBLE PACK



A comprehensive double album featuring selected tracks of integral country and urban blues sung and played by bluesmen who show that whatever the type of music it is always an intensely personal form of self-expression.

The blues are now more popular than ever before thus making the series and indeed this product more internationally appealing. The samples features one track from each of the twelve volumes highlighting the importance of such traditional blues material.



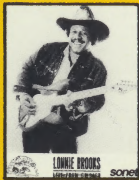
A book, also titled 'The Legacy Of The Blues', by Samuel Charters has grown out of the research that has gone into these recordings. Published by Boyars in London and Da Capo in New York this book has been written with considerable devotion about twelve major bluesmen each of whom represents a major facet of the blues.



Siegel-Schwartz



Lil' Ed & The Blue Imperials



Lonnie Brooks

Other fine blues recordings of both historical note and with the contemporary rock influenced urban feel of today are available from the Chicago based ALLIGATOR label.

Producer Bruce Iglauer started Alligator in 1974 by touring the major cities of the U.S.A. selling Hound Dog Taylor albums from the trunk of his car. Today, Alligator is one of the world's most renowned independent record labels with a roster of mainly blues related artists.



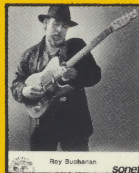
A C Reed



Albert Collins

On Alligator - exclusively distributed in Europe by Sonet since 1974 - you'll find new records by Lonnie Mack, Koko Taylor, Albert Collins, Johnny Winter, James Cotton, Roy Buchanan, A.C. Reed as well as the finest new artists around which includes tracks from Robert Cray, Donald Kinsey & The Kinsey Report, Lil Ed & The Blues Imperials and many more.

Check out the latest releases by sending for the Alligator Blues Catalogue to: ALLIGATOR Records, 121 Ledbury Road, London W11 1AQ.

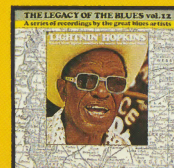
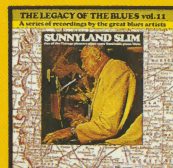
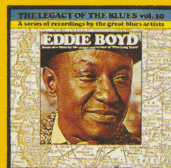
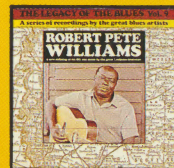
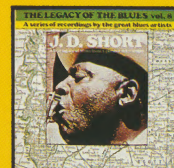
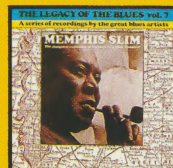
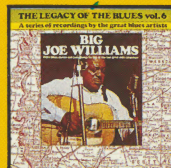
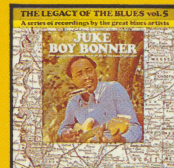
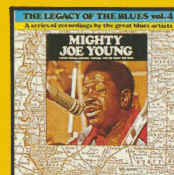
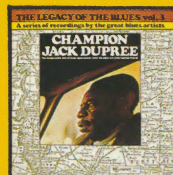
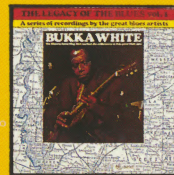


Roy Buchanan

GENUINE HOUSEROCKIN' MUSIC

THE LEGACY OF THE BLUES, From the legendary series of Sonet Recordings.

NOW AVAILABLE ON COMPACT DISC



This Vital Series of Recordings

The dictionary defines legacy as something of richness handed from one generation to the next, and this series of blues recordings was gathered to show some of the richness of this blues legacy. The purpose was to show the blues in all its ranges and varieties, not only in the familiar styles from Chicago and other urban ghettos, but also in music from the Mississippi Delta and the backstreets of Memphis and St. Louis.

There's almost every kind of blues, here, from Big Joe Williams' rough and ready downhome shouts to the sophisticated piano blues of Memphis Slim, from the raucous barrel house blues of Champion Jack Dupree and his talented back-up band to the stinging blues commentary of Juke Boy Bonner. If you want to hear the guitar at its bluestiest there's Lightnin' Hopkins. If you want to hear how the blues sounded when it first began there's Bukka White or Mississippi's J.D. Short, or if you want to hear today's younger Chicago generation there's Mighty Joe Young and his Southside club band.

The Series took more than three years to produce and involved thousands of miles of travel. It finally became too far reaching for a single producer so the talents of noted blues producers like Chris Strachwitz and John Fahey were enlisted. The final result fits the definition of the word legacy very well, it is a vivid glimpse into the rich traditions of the blues that these musicians have handed on to the future.

A Series of Recordings by the Great Blues Artists

Vol. 1 BUKKA WHITE	LP-SNTF-609/CAS-ZCSN-609/CD-SNTCD-609
Vol. 2 SNOOKS EAGLIN	LP-SNTF-625/CAS-ZCSN-625/CD-SNTCD-625
Vol. 3 CHAMPION JACK DUPREE	LP-SNTF-626/CAS-ZCSN-626/CD-SNTCD-626
Vol. 4 MIGHTY JOE YOUNG	LP-SNTF-633/CAS-ZCSN-633/CD-SNTCD-633
Vol. 5 JUKE BOY BONNER	LP-SNTF-634/CAS-ZCSN-634/CD-SNTCD-634
Vol. 6 BIG JOE WILLIAMS	LP-SNTF-635/CAS-ZCSN-635/CD-SNTCD-635
Vol. 7 MEMPHIS SLIM	LP-SNTF-647/CAS-ZCSN-647/CD-SNTCD-647
Vol. 8 J. D. SHORT	LP-SNTF-648/CAS-ZCSN-648/CD-SNTCD-648
Vol. 9 ROBERT PETE WILLIAMS	LP-SNTF-649/CAS-ZCSN-649/CD-SNTCD-649
Vol. 10 EDDIE BOYD	LP-SNTF-670/CAS-ZCSN-670/CD-SNTCD-670
Vol. 11 SUNNYLAND SLIM	LP-SNTF-671/CAS-ZCSN-671/CD-SNTCD-671
Vol. 12 LIGHTNIN' HOPKINS	LP-SNTF-672/CAS-ZCSN-672/CD-SNTCD-672
SAMPLER VARIOUS	LP-SNTX-1/CAS-ZCSNTX-1/CD-SNTXCD-1
DOUBLE VARIOUS/MAXI	LP-SNTD-202/CAS-ZCSN-202/CD-SNTDCD-202

The Bukka White recordings were produced by ED Denson and John Fahey, Snooks Eaglin by Quint Davis, Juke Boy Bonner by Chris Strachwitz, and Memphis Slim by Clyde Otis.

THE LEGACY OF THE BLUES.

BUKKA WHITE

Booker T. Washington White, from Aberdeen, Mississippi, was born in 1906. The cousin of B. B. King, Bukka is remembered as a fine blues singer, gifted songwriter and deft guitarist. He first recorded in the thirties, including one session for Alan Lomax which was taped while he was serving time at the infamous Parchman Farm prison, but then came a gap of 24 years before he was recorded again, by ED Denson and John Fahey for this series. Despite the passage of time there had been almost no change in Bukka's style; he hadn't slowed his picking and the songs still had their powerful raw edge.

SNOOKS EAGLIN

Fird 'Snooks' Eaglin was born in New Orleans in 1936. Blind from the age of 19 months, he taught himself to play guitar at the age of six, sang in church and performed on local radio. In his teens he worked with the Flamingoes rhythm and blues band, but also performed as a solo act, and it was in this latter guise that he was recorded and earned the description of 'folk blues artist', a label he actively resisted because his ambitions lay with leading an R&B orientated combo. As these tracks reveal, he's a brilliant guitarist and a sensitive singer, with a warm, strong voice.

CHAMPION JACK DUPREE

William 'Champion Jack' Dupree was born in New Orleans in 1910, of French and Cherokee Indian heritage. He was a prize fighter in the thirties, hence the 'Champion Jack' nickname, then began recording in the forties, for Okeh in Chicago. Jack is one of the great entertainers of the blues, not brooding, like the Delta men, or vividly intense like the Chicago men, he's just himself, a wiry, wistful man with a large sense of life's pains and joys. Dupree wandered and worked and sang through most of the United States before moving to Europe, in 1959, where he continued to sing the blues and was recorded, in London, for this series.

MIGHTY JOE YOUNG

Joseph 'Mighty Joe' Young was born in Shreveport, Louisiana in 1927 and acquired an early interest in music from his guitarist father. Brought up in Louisiana and Los Angeles, Joe moved to Milwaukee in 1945 where he was an amateur boxer and formed his first blues band. Ten years later he went to Chicago and was soon an important fixture of the city's active club scene. Joe, like most of the 'younger' Chicago guitarists, has learned a lot from B. B. King, but has built his own style out of it – a kind of open, spiralling sense of phase that moves in an almost unbroken melodic flow.

ROBERT PETE WILLIAMS

Robert Williams – the 'Pete' was a nickname he was given in his teens – was born in Zachary, Louisiana in 1914. A tough and impassioned man who made music to match, Robert was almost the archetypal country blues singer; a poet of his own experiences, his language and idiom coming from the background which shaped him – the rough juke joints, the tough labouring jobs and the bitter prison experiences, including a spell at the Angola Prison in Louisiana for murder.

J. D. SHORT

J. D. Short (his given names were initials only) was born in Port Gibson, Mississippi in 1902, an area that didn't have a particularly strong blues heritage, but when he was 10 his family moved to Clarksdale, one of the Delta towns, and here he soaked up the blues until the age of 21, when he moved north to the city St. Louis, which became his home for over three decades. He worked with a blues group, also as a one-man band and occasionally as a duo with his cousin, Big Joe Williams. J.D. Short's singing is pure Delta blues and he never changed his style, but he had a unique mouth vibrato (which earned him the nickname 'Jelly Jaw') and which makes his music particularly individual.

From the legendary series of Sonet Recordings.

JUKE BOY BONNER

Weldon 'Juke Boy' Bonner, born in Bellville, Texas in 1932, was a singer in the old, country blues style and one of the most interesting poets of the genre. He came out of rich blues country, the hilly scrub forest country of East Texas which was also home to Texas Alexander, Blind Lemon Jefferson and Lightnin' Hopkins. Bonner moved to Houston when he was 15, won a talent competition and worked the clubs, then travelled to Oakland, California, where he cut his first records, in the mid-fifties. He subsequently divided his time between Texas and California, recording his Legacy Of The Blues album in Oakland.

EDDIE BOYD

Edward Boyd was born in Stovall, Mississippi in 1914, he served his musical apprenticeship in the clubs of North Memphis, then moved to Chicago in 1941 where he earned a reputation as a fine pianist and singer. Eddie led a popular blues combo which toured extensively and he experienced a brief period of national fame when his 'Five Long Years' became a best selling record. In the lack of violence which had always sickened him in Chicago, he decided to base himself in Europe, living for a time in Paris, and then Helsinki.

SUNNYLAND SLIM

Albert Luandrew, who was born in Vance, Mississippi in 1907, gave himself the name 'Sunnyland Slim' in the forties, when he was working in Memphis, Missouri and rural Tennessee. He came to Chicago in 1943 to make a record, stayed, and by the fifties was established as one of the city's leading blues pianist. Working by himself he's everything a bluesman should be - by turns introspective and brooding, loose and excited; singing about things that happened to him thirty years ago or things that happened to him yesterday, his big hands picking their way across the piano, filling and building the blues.

LIGHTNIN' HOPKINS

Sam 'Lightnin' Hopkins was born in Centerville, Texas in 1912, the son of a musician, and he began making music on a homemade cigar box from the age of eight. As a performer, he had a great ability to project his emotions and to draw the listener into his music, in a way that was almost unmatched among modern bluesmen. He spent most of his adult life in Houston and, despite all the years he played in big city, he always managed to sound as if he had come down from the country last week, and he could still get more out of a guitar than anyone else playing in his style.

BIG JOE WILLIAMS

Joe Lee Williams, born in Crawford, Mississippi in 1903, began making music at the age of five on a homemade one-string guitar, singing songs he'd learnt from his parents. Joe was one of the last of the old line of bluesmen, with a bitter strength and wiry determination, and he learnt how to get by in the years he spend wandering and singing in some of the worst sections of the south. When he recorded the blues for this series, the feeling of Mississippi, of the old dances in the line camps, the noisy cabin parties, and the drinking in the back county honky tonks, was still there in this voice and his fingers.

MEMPHIS SLIM

Peter Chatman was born in Memphis in 1916 and acquired his nickname as a skinny teenager playing at the Midway Cafe in Memphis. He moved to Chicago at the age of 25, and he was one of the musicians who recorded for the Bluebird blues line, alongside Big Bill Broonzy and Washboard Sam. When the music became unfashionable he changed to city blues, leading the House Rockers, and earned a reputation as one of the most dedicated professionals in the blues world. In the sixties he embarked on a new career, making solo folk-blues recordings and subsequently spent most of his time working on the European festival circuit.

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LIGHTNIN' HOPKINS

Legacy Of The Blues
Volume 12

Made in Switzerland

STEREO

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO

SNTCD 672

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Produced by Sam Charters